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EASTER FOOD PARADE

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. E. J. Rowell, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, broadcast Thursday, April 14, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington. I need not remind you that Easter is only three days off. I mention it, however, because Easter is the theme of news that Ruth Van Deman and E. J. (Mike) Rowell, bring us today -- as they pool their efforts in reviewing the Easter food market. They haven't confided in me what particular foods they're reporting on. But I hope they'll have something to say about spring lamb and asparagus.

E. J. ROWELL:

They will.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

"Asparagus to inspire gentle thoughts". And by the way I think it was Charles Lamb who said that. Well, Mr. Rowell, your turn first with the market flash on spring lamb.

ROWELL:

Spring lamb - more plentiful than usual, due to favorable weather and the lateness of Easter. Wholesale price, live weight, about a third less than a year ago. That is \$8.15 this week per hundred pounds as against \$12.25 in April 1937.

VAN DEMAN:

But I suppose there's no telling just how that works out in the retail market.

ROWELL:

No. Quality affects that a great deal. And local preferences. Some markets want the lighter spring lambs three to five months old, coming now from Arizona, Texas, and California. And by spring lamb here I don't mean the "hot-house" lamb. That is a very scarce and exceedingly high priced article that goes to an ultra-fancy trade. Then there are the heavier yearlings, the so-called "wooled" lambs, that have been on feed all winter. Probably you've noticed Wallace Kadderly quoting prices on these wooled lambs in his swing around the markets.

VAN DEMAN:

I have, but I never knew just what he meant by wooled lambs.

ROWELL:

They're the ones that were shorn before they were sent to market. They're generally about a year old.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I know, under the market definition, lamb is lamb until the animals are 14 months old.

(over)

ROWELL:

That's right. After that, lamb is mutton.

VAN DEMAN:

Personally, I prefer this somewhat older heavier lamb. It's generally fatter. That makes it easier to roast. And it's better for boning in chops and roasts.

ROWELL:

Boned leg of lamb, for instance.

VAN DEMAN:

Speaking of things easy to carve.

ROWELL:

Why not? The boned cuts are just as easy to cook, aren't they?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, practically. It takes a little longer of course to make a well-seasoned bread crumb stuffing, and after the stuffing's in place to skewer or sew the edges together. But the roasting method's no different. And the result is certainly worth the effort. Boned shoulder of lamb with a savory mint stuffing is one of the most delicious inexpensive roasts, I know.

ROWELL:

Mint stuffing? Isn't that something new?

VAN DEMAN:

Not so very. The recipe's in our lamb leaflet, along with directions for cooking all the cuts of lamb in savory ways - and incidentally cooking in the modern way so as to keep the natural juices in the meat.

ROWELL:

Well, the recipe for mint stuffing never got around to the Rowell family. It sounds good. I'm going to take a copy of your lamb leaflet home.

VAN DEMAN:

And be sure to let me know how you like it. Now back on the news track, haven't you something about ham?

ROWELL:

Only that like all other meats it's down in price as compared with a few months ago. Veal is another spring meat that's coming to market in good supply now.

VAN DEMAN:

One of the leaner, and what's sometimes called "lighter" meats. Veal requires a little more care in cooking than meat that has its own thick covering of fat. But a moderate cooking temperature will keep in what juice there is, just as with any other kind.

ROWELL:

Here's a line on the egg situation. Easter wouldn't be Easter without eggs. So fortunately this year, at least fortunately for the consumer, eggs are plentiful, the price is moderate, and the quality right now is excellent.

VAN DEMAN:

Good time to put them down in waterglass or limewater for use next winter.

ROWELL:

Couldn't be better. Prices will not be any lower this year, and indications are that egg prices will be higher next fall than they were last fall.

VAN DEMAN:

And if you're going to preserve eggs at home it's always best to take top-quality eggs during April, May, or early June.

ROWELL:

Again let me repeat, whether you're buying eggs for future use or present use, they've struck rock bottom in price and in some places are on the upgrade.

VAN DEMAN:

I suppose there's still that price differential between brown shell and white shells in some places.

ROWELL:

Oh yes. Boston is still paying at least 2 cents more a dozen for brown eggs. New York just reverses it and puts a premium on white eggs.

VAN DEMAN:

And as far as food value goes the color of the shell doesn't make a particle of difference.

ROWELL:

And that goes for the purple and red and green ones the youngsters will be rolling on the White House lawn Easter Monday.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, food value doesn't count for much in them. But on green and white asparagus, now, it's another story. That makes a big difference in the vitamin A.

ROWELL:

The green has more vitamin A?

VAN DEMAN:

Definitely. In fact some studies show that bleached asparagus has no vitamin A whatever, but the green is a rich source.

ROWELL:

Well, I don't know whether it's for vitamins, or flavor, or looks, or what, but the present consumer preference seems to be for green asparagus. Long green grass as the market men call it. We're getting it now from Georgia, North and South Carolina, and California. Those are the big shipping regions right now. Then of course there are quantities of asparagus cut and sold locally. Boston, for instance, has its Concord asparagus.

KADDERLY:

(From a distance). Ad lib asparagus areas in Pacific Northwest -- along Columbia River -- Eastern Multnomah county in Oregon; and Kennewick, east of Cascades in Washington.

ROWELL:

That's right, Wallace. Speak up for the Northwest.

VAN DEMAN:

And in college I remember cooking Connecticut River Valley asparagus in a chafing dish for a Sunday breakfast party in my room.

ROWELL:

That where you learned about asparagus "to inspire gentle thoughts?"

VAN DEMAN:

I guess it was.

ROWELL:

Are you sure the chafing dish kept in all the vitamins?

VAN DEMAN:

I wouldn't recommend it, but I went by the old saying of the Romans: "Quicker than you can cook asparagus". Even in the days of Augustus Caesar they seemed to know there was virtue in cooking asparagus quickly.

ROWELL:

By the way do you recommend putting a pinch of soda in the water?

VAN DEMAN:

No sir. I do not. If you alkalize the water too much in cooking any green vegetable you destroy part of the vitamins. It's not difficult to cook asparagus in an open kettle so you can keep most of the fresh green color and sacrifice no food value. Some of the iron and other minerals and vitamins dissolve into the liquid, but they're retrieved if you use the liquid for soup, in case there's too much of it to serve with the stalks.

ROWELL:

Well, asparagus, no matter how carefully you cook it, is one of the vegetables that are best when fresh. As soon as the stalk is cut, changes begin to take place. It loses sugar and becomes more fibrous. Right now the Department in cooperation with the California Experiment Station is working on a new method of precooking asparagus before shipping, so as to hold down these undesirable changes and keep the stalks tender and sweet.

VAN DEMAN:

More power to them and I think that's speaking for all asparagus eaters. Next on my list here are strawberries.

ROWELL:

Cold wet weather has set them back a little in some places. But Louisiana and South Carolina expect to reach the peak of their strawberry shipments soon. And if the weather is good, North Carolina should be sending about 5000 crates north this week.

VAN DEMAN:

5000 crates.

ROWELL:

160,000 quarts - enough for quite a few shortcakes.

VAN DEMAN:

And strawberry sauce for ice cream. I'd rather have that for Easter dinner.

ROWELL:

All right, either one suits me. And there are new potatoes coming from Florida and other points south. And plenty of peas, and carrots, and lettuce, and radishes, and celery - - - .

VAN DEMAN:

And mixed greens for a spring salad bowl.

ROWELL:

Yes. The mild winter in many places is bringing things right along. Vegetables are much more abundant than they were a year ago. And there's still a big supply of citrus fruits and winter apples.

KADDERLY:

Maybe it's a good time to mention those "Apple recipes" of yours again, Ruth.

VAN DEMAN:

Maybe so. Apple recipes aren't usually timely in April, but this is certainly the Big Apple year.

ROWELL:

It certainly is, Miss Van Deman. More apples were in cold storage on April 1st than ever before on that date. Something over 12 million bushels. That's nearly 5 million bushels more than were in storage a year ago. Apples are the big item in the cold storage report issued by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics day before yesterday.

KADDERLY:

Ruth -- in view of all that abundance of apples still on the market, maybe there are some in this audience who'd like to send for a copy of your folder of 29 recipes for serving apples. There was a very heavy drain on the supply a few months ago --- how is the supply now?

VAN DEMAN:

We still have a pretty good supply, Mr. Kadderly.

KADDERLY:

All right. And I'd like to mention also the lamb leaflet -- Lamb as You Like It -- is the title. If any of you want either or both of these publications on lamb and apples, send a card to Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

And thank you, Ruth, (we'll be looking for you again next Thursday), thanks for this preview of the Easter food parade -- with the aid of Mike Rowell.

